

# Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

## Wild Chervil

*Anthriscus sylvestris* L. Hoffmann



Photo: Leslie Mehrhoff, [IPANE](#)

### Description:

This is a biennial or short-lived perennial plant in the carrot family. It grows three to four feet on average but sometimes grows over six feet. Stems are hollow, branched and hairy. Fern-like leaves are nearly hairless and compound. Leaves form a basal rosette the first year.

### Biology and Spread:

Wild chervil spreads both by seed (moved by birds, human activity, vehicles and water) and lateral budding at the top of the roots. The roots are thick, tuberous and aggressive, spreading rapidly. The taproot can extend over six feet deep.

### Background:

This plant has many common names: bur chervil, cow parsley, keck and wild chervil. It is originally from Europe and may have been introduced into North America as part of a wild-flower seed mix. It was first noted in Massachusetts in 1919.



Photo: Leslie Mehrhoff, [IPANE](#)

### Ecological Threat:

Wild chervil competes with native plants for light, water and nutrients. It can shade out surrounding vegetation. It is also a host for a virus that infects carrots, parsnips and celery.

### Range:

Wild chervil can be found in most New England states, through the Mid-Atlantic, west through the Great Lake states and also in the Pacific Northwest.

White flowers with five petals are produced in umbrella-like clusters that bloom from late May to early July during the plant's second year. Each flower produces two joined, shiny seed pods that turn from green to brown.

### Habitat:

This plant can be found in open woods, roadsides, pastures and fields, as well as disturbed sites. It prefers rich, moist soil.



Photo: Leslie Mehrhoff, [IPANE](#)

## How to Control this Species:

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### Manual and Mechanical

Rosettes and immature plants can be pulled up by hand or dug out at the roots. Mature plants must be removed below the root crown to prevent re-sprouting. Mowing can be done before seed set, but root expansion will continue.

### Chemical

Several readily available general use herbicides will work on wild chervil, including clopyralid and dicamba. Herbicide should be applied shortly before blooming and one month after a pre-bloom cutting. Be sure to follow the label and all state herbicide regulations.

## Look-A-Likes:

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There are many other members of the carrot family that could be found in the wild that look similar to wild chervil. Fruits are necessary for proper identification. Be sure you know what you are looking at before starting any control program.

Some look-a-likes include invasives like poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), non-natives like Chinese hemlock parsley (*Conioselinum chinense*), Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*) and caraway (*Carum carvi*).



Photo: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA,  
[www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

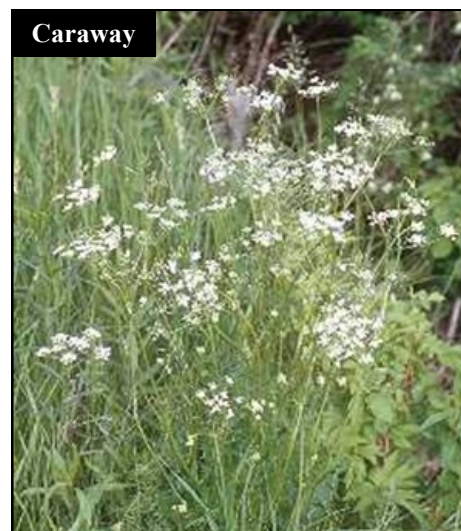


Photo: Emmet Judziewicz, [U. of Wisconsin](http://U.ofWisconsin)

## References:

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U.S. Forest Service Weed of the Week:

[http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive\\_plants/weeds/wild-chervil.pdf](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/wild-chervil.pdf)

Invasive Plant Atlas of New England:

<http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specieId=39>

## For More Information:

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Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, National Park Service:

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/midatlantic.pdf>

Invasive Plants Field and Reference Guide, U.S. Forest Service:

[http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/misc/ip/ip\\_field\\_guide.pdf](http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/misc/ip/ip_field_guide.pdf)

